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POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

And only once from his lips came a cry.
"Aw, Will, quit that! If ye've got to die,
Die like a Warner!" with flashing eye

Flung his mother. Ere night she had laid him straight,
And all on her shoulders had borne his weight
Up the steep hillside, to the grave-house gate.

She bore him up and she dug him deep,
And left him alone in the earth to sleep;
Then stumbled back to the shack—to weep.

One regrets such things as the *o'er* and *ere* and *all on*, which belong neither to modern speech nor to the "pristine freshness and simplicity" which the poet, in his preface, admires in the mountaineer's somewhat archaic diction. Indeed, we long throughout the book for more of the authentic racy flavor of their talk—if not dialect, which Mr. Bradley has "not attempted to render with any literalness," then a certain quality inherited, we are told, from Elizabethan English. But at least these ballads—a few of them—give us a sharp impression of the morale, the life, of those marooned groups whom the modern current has passed by.

S. W.

JEAN DE BOSSCHÈRE'S POEMS

The Closed Door, by Jean de Bosschère: Illustrated by the author. With a Translation by F. S. Flint and an Introduction by May Sinclair. John Lane, London and New York.

This Frenchman, like certain modern poets of our own language, sees the characteristics, as of individual life, which lurk in inanimate objects and even in situations, as well as

Jean de Bosschère's Poems

in living beings. He feels what might be called the soul of these. This form of vision is perhaps mysticism, but it is entirely apart from, though not contradictory to, theological mysticism. To one with a developed sensitiveness this form of individuality is a thing as real—in this world of illusions—as material appearances are. Much of Harold Monro's poetry is on this theme, and one may trace it in some poems of H. D., of Pound, Eliot, and others. One can find a slight similarity between Amy Lowell and Jean de Bosschère in the exaggerated form of the expression of their vision, though there is a heat and an artistic self-abnegation in the French poet which Miss Lowell does not attain, perhaps does not wish to attain.

Homère Mare, for example, is a story-poem about the attachment of the human soul to the souls of his surroundings, and its estrangement from them. It has the serene, subdued beauty of a sunny pebbled road through a fair country.

L'Offre de Plebs is probably the most beautiful poem in the volume—one can hardly over-praise its peculiar beauty. The subject is sympathetic with the poet's temperament, and its gloom and playfulness express a depth of sensitiveness rarely reached. It is the perfect image of a mood—desire for solitude; and in spite of wistfulness it has no trace of sentimentality:

Je veux qu'il ait un Dieu!
Et qu'il brûle en sacrifices toutes ses amours
Et ses maisons;
Et que, pour moi, son esprit prenne

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La robe des moines
Close comme la peau des grenouilles.
Je veux qu'il ait un Dieu!
Il faut que cela soit moi. . . .

And:

Je ne veux pas d'un coeur qui ait aimé;
Je ne veux d'un ami qui sera hérétique.
Il y a la chair et le diable de l'esprit.
Il y a les arbres et aussi les parfums;
Il y a des ombres, des souvenirs;
Il y a des images, des rêves,
Et il y a l'espoir
Et la douleur.

Ulysse Bâtit son Lit is the expression of an individual soul in a small or large village—it might be in France, Argentina, or America, for it is everywhere the same. The poem is a perfect embodiment of the pettiness of the village spirit, which in this case resented a man's way of "building" his bed! God help these bed-builders of France, Argentina, or America!

The latter parts of the volume express more personal emotions and are less unlike the work of other poets. The themes of *Doutes*, *Gridale*, *Verger*, *La Promesse du Merle*, have been treated in poetry in various forms. *Doutes* and *Gridale* are in places rhetorical, but always lit with a weird and sometimes quaint fire which is the poet's own. Parts of them form complete poems, like these about his father and mother from *Doutes*:

Il fumait sa pipe avec intégrité.
On se collait près de lui
Pour tirer par le nez son odeur d'homme.
.

Jean de Bosschère's Poems

Et la mère était le pain et le beurre,
La rosée froide de six heures, et la cerise,
Les draps blancs au réséda,
Et le rond chaud des lèvres sur la joue.

In *La Promesse du Merle* the sombreness is relieved by the lightness of touch:

Ce n'est pas fier de finir
Toujours à moitié! . . .
De jeter trois notes de feu
Qui ouvrent le cœur fané
Avec des ézardes de faim et de soif.

In this poem, as well as in some of the others, the poetic height and depth of the emotion sometimes appear strained, but that depends on the temperament and even on the mood of the reader.

In the illustrations one can find the influence of Kandinsky's black-and-white—haunting patterns often like spilled and partly dried water. Also there may be a suggestion of Alfred Kubin—compare for instance Kubin's illustrations to his romance with De Bosschère's at the end of *Doutes*. He is trying to escape Beardsley, and usually succeeds—indeed, he is on the whole self-expressive. One wishes that our American illustrators would give us, as intimately as these men, their own happy or sombre individualities.

The translation is too servile, and lacks charm, especially toward the end of the book. But printing the French and English versions on opposite pages is too severe a test for any translator. M. M.